764 dying in the evening or during the night is buried the next day, one dying in the morning will probably be interred by nightfall.

766 Burial customs for children differ from those of adults. The immediate burial of a dead child seems to be general in the villages, even if, according to one informant, it dies at 12 or 1 o'clock in the morning. With the death verified, relatives are called, and the child might be taken away within 15 minutes. Certain distinctions are made depending on whether (1) the child is still-born or dies shortly after birth, (2) the child is under 8 years old, and (3) the child is 8 years or older. A premature, still-born child, or an infant dying shortly after birth is buried almost immediately in the [845] compound, usually behind the house. The child under eight is buried in a temporary grave near the family tomb, remaining there until the family tomb is opened upon the death of an adult. The infant's bones are then gathered up and put in the tomb. The temporary grave is prepared by a younger man of the family. The dead child is carried by the mother, an aunt or other female relative. The tomb, in general practice, is opened for a child over 8 years of age.

These are general statements and the details vary. In Minatogawa, for example, a child's funeral is similar to an adult's, but the body is not put in the coffin until the tomb is reached. The mother, or a close female relative, carries it in her arms. The coffin is carried by other mourners. The explanation given is that it was formerly believed that the child might revive on the way. In a child's funeral here, there is no banner announcing the name and death date, at the head of the procession. Neither is a hearse or funeral palanquin (gan) used.

In Matsuda, this palanquin also is not used for children 8 and under. Whether a tomb is opened for a child seems to depend on individual family custom. In one case, an extended family tomb was not opened for a child; in another it was. The child is carried to the tomb and then placed in the coffin. In this village, children are not buried immediately. The custom is the same as for adults.

764 Judging by descriptions which villagers gave of pre-war customs,
178 funerals and burial customs have been simplified in the post-war period. The services of Buddhist priests have been almost completely dispensed with. Offerings are more modest. Priestesses (noro) and their assistants [793] seldom officiate. The contemporary rural Okinawan funeral is simple. The following description of a funeral observed near Gushichan village probably is typical.

764 The deceased, a woman of 40, died about eleven in the morning. The funeral procession passed the village office at 5:30 on the same day. There were no special ceremonies before the funeral. The body, washed and dressed, had been placed in the coffin which was put on the funeral palanquin or hearse. This red palanquin is normally owned by the village. Since the war, not all villages have an gan.

The hearse was carried by four young men. (There may be 8 pallbearers,

construction materials, and to maintenance.

In an earlier chapter, a villager's remark was quoted to the effect that Minatogawa was a branch family of Itoman. This is well illustrated in the burial customs of this village. Both children and adults are placed in a simple, temporary tomb, usually along the coast near the stonecutting area. Later the tomb is opened, the bones washed, and sent to Itoman. The transfer of the remains from the temporary tombs of the village to the extended family tomb in Itoman may be done at a time when it is necessary to open the Itoman tomb because of the death of a member of the extended family there. There is no second funeral. The cleaned bones are put in a box. There are short prayers before the opened Itoman tomb, the bones placed inside, and the box discarded.

In the adjoining village of Nagamo, burial customs are similar to those of Hanashiro. Nagamo has three different kinds of tombs: (1) large gable and turtleback extended family types, (2) a similar large tomb for a single family, and (3) small tombs for individual families.

The tombs of Matsuda also are mainly of the extended family type. There are examples here of the turtleback, the gable, and the new small tomb. They are scattered throughout the village area, sometimes on the summit of a hill whose slopes are given over to terraced rice fields or dry cropping. Not all families own tombs; for reasons of economy, the small tomb for individual burial is becoming more frequent.

In all the villages, after the coffin is put inside the tomb, it is left there for about three years. The tomb is reopened, the bones are removed from the coffin, washed, and put back in the tomb, tasks done by female relatives of the deceased, usually women over 40 years old. This three year period is not a set one. If a later death occurs in the family, the coffin may be opened at that time. An old custom of placing the bones in an urn after they are taken from the coffin has been abandoned. Basil Hall has some interesting comments on these old Okinawan urns.

3

Observances in Memory of the Dead

Observances in memory of the dead are held in all villages on the 1st, 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th, 35th, 42nd, and 49th day after death, and on the 1st, 3rd, 7th, 13th, 25th, and 33rd anniversary of death.

The simple observances and prayers at the tomb on the day following burial have already been mentioned. At the home, temporary memorial tablets made of white paper (shiroihai) are prepared to be replaced later with permanent red memorial tablets on the Buddhist god shelf. Both at home and at the tomb only relatives or close friends participate in the prayers and food offerings.

2:Maretzki & Maretzki E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
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women chant. The tempo becomes more and more frenzied, and at a certain moment a bell rings. Nobody knows who rings it, and no amount of questioning elicited any information other than that this was done by divine action.

Ancestral worship is equally important in the life of Taira people. Each house of an oldest son has a shelf with a shrine in the main living room. On this shelf the family keeps the ancestral tablets, each representing a deceased ancestor of a recent period. The tablets for whole family lines are kept on the shelves of the main houses. Through this system a family maintains continuity between the living and the dead. Although a deceased person is believed to become a buddha or a god who ascends to heaven, his presence is still felt by the living relatives. If they fail to make the required offerings on the first and fifteenth day of each lunar month, or otherwise neglect religious duties toward the ancestor, misfortune may come to the family. At the same time, the worship of common ancestors holds branches of the larger kin groups together.

No village adult died during our stay, but the funeral practices for adults described by Glacken (1955) and Pitts et al. (1955) for other villages in Okinawa are similar. Seven years is the age limit for a child burial, which is simple and does not require attendance of people other than immediate relatives and perhaps one or two neighbors.* During the study an 8-year-old boy died from an illness and was given a full funeral, which is similar to that of adults.

The funeral must take place at the first outgoing tide after the body has been prepared and dressed. Accompanied by family, residents of the ward, and mourners from other parts of the village whose number depends on the prominence of the dead, the body is carried on a simple, open litter to the tomb area just west of the central village (see map 2). Women feel free to show their emotions, while men remain outwardly calm. Until decomposition takes place, the body remains in a tomb used by the whole village for temporary entombment. Like other village ceremonies, funerals are less elaborate now than they once were, perhaps to the relief of all concerned, since death is highly anxiety provoking, and nobody feels comfortable during the prayers and the ritual farewell to the corpse at the tomb. The participants receive a cup of sake before leaving the tomb area to cleanse them of the pollution of death. Some people still prefer to return to the village by a different route so that the spirit of the dead person will be fooled and unable to follow.

* The reason for this is possibly that the younger child has not yet fulfilled his filial obligations.

765 After death, memorial services are held in the home of the deceased
769 every seventh day until the 49th day when a more elaborate ceremony
782 concludes this period, and a permanent tablet is installed on the house shrine. On this day, too, offerings to the deceased change from white rice to red-colored rice, indicating the end of the mourning period. From now on, observances in memory of the dead are held on the first, third, seventh, thirteenth, twenty-fifth, and thirty-third anniversary of death. These are small family affairs at which special food is prepared and offered at the shrine before it is consumed.

765 The body is left in the tomb for at least three years until a propitious day when the whole village decides to wash the bones of all those who have died within the preceding three to seven years. On Bone Washing Day little groups of family members gather around the coffin. They take out the bones, clean them, wrap them in a white cloth and place
[778] them in an urn. Women do all the cleaning of bones because it is be-
[152] lieved that they have more power to expel the evil. They weep freely,
[852] and even some men find it hard to restrain their emotions. Young children are kept away from the tomb area at this time. The urns are then placed inside the family tomb, which has been opened for this purpose. Remains other than bones are burned with the coffin.

769 Every lunar March ancestral services take place at the tombs, at-
782 tended by many members of the kin groups to whom each tomb belongs. Some come from the city or other villages for this occasion, including women who have married into another kin group. This celebration of the dead is more serious than other religious events. Offerings of sake and special delicacies are made and then eaten by the family group. One family, sitting in picnic style around the tomb after their prayers, even began to sing and dance—probably to the delight of the ancestors who in their life must have enjoyed many a good feast and dance. Tombs of other relatives may also be visited for short prayers and other offerings.

775 Spirits of the dead are harmful only if the deceased is not from the
784 village. For this reason new residents formerly could not bury their
766 dead near the village. Even now, recent settlers in the central village
[764] have no tombs and keep their dead in urns in a cave, and the residents of outlying houses or field houses have a separate tomb area altogether. If a stranger happens to die in the village, measures are taken to prevent his spirit from doing harm. The body of a fisherman from southern Okinawa was brought to shore after a storm. There it was left for several hours on the beach under a tent in the hot sun until relatives arrived in a hired car to take the body home. Even then peo-

2:Maretzki & Maretzki E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
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ple did not carry it through the streets but along the shore to a spot nearby where the car could pull up.

Communication with ancestral or family spirits lies in the hands of individual households or the larger kin group. In general, as with the nature deities, women maintain the relationship. The oldest woman in the house prays and makes offerings in front of the divine shelf or by the tombs. Sometimes the high priestess, whose only regular role in the cult of ancestors centers around the mythical founder of the village to whom vague references are made, is asked to conduct a special prayer for a family at its ancestral shrine. Such invitations are usually the result of consultation with another religious practitioner to whom one turns in case of misfortune.*

Those who are considering a special undertaking, such as building a new house or moving to another one, or transporting ancestral tablets from one home shrine to another, seek the advice of a diviner, the *sanjinsō* or *yekisha*. This expert, always a man, consults books on the workings of the universe, special astrological calendars from which he can predict events by using a horoscope calculated on the birth date of the person seeking advice.

Although it would seem from the attendance at ceremonies that older people, mostly women, are the supporters of religion, even the most modern of the Tairans seem to share beliefs in the power of the supernatural forces and are loath to make an open break with traditions. One may verbalize that the old religion is just "superstition," but when it comes to dealing with adverse events, when somebody suggests that perhaps the *yuta* should be consulted, or a special offering is in order, or when the old special wine of the gods is prepared from rice for Boat Race Day, then many of the apparent apostates cooperate. To some extent this is done to appease the older people, but fear of neglecting duties, especially toward ancestors, is probably much stronger in general than people's behavior would suggest. Religious influence, then, which controlled so many facets of village life in former days, still acts as a strong force in uniting the members of families and descent groups as well as in binding together the community as a unit separate from other communities.

* See Chapter 9 for description of the *yuta* or shaman.